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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6769
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0651
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1575
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4654
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4188
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7741
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5301
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1239
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1174
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0108
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3363
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1085
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001079

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; EEB/CIP/BA;
EAP/EX - RBLANKENSHIP
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TREASURY FOR OASIA: SCHUN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/01/2017

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ECPS](#) [PGOV](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMESE GOVERNMENT ONCE AGAIN CUTS OFF INTERNET
ACCESS

REF: A. RANGOON 1074
[1](#)B. RANGOON 1015
[1](#)C. RANGOON 1012
[1](#)D. RANGOON 970
[1](#)E. CARL-YODER/COPE EMAILS 10/5-10/15

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Classified By: Economic Officer Samantha A. Carl-Yoder for Reasons 1.4
(b and d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Following the renewed march by 200 monks in Pakokku on October 31, Burma once again finds itself with no internet access. On November 1, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MTC) and Myanmar Teleport, Burma's two internet service providers (ISPs), officially announced that any internet difficulties were due to problems with underwater cable connections. However, IT insiders confirmed the ISPs were following GOB orders to cut service. Internet cafes in Rangoon have closed, although several businesses are able to access the internet via Thai satellite. MTC and Myanmar Teleport officials could not tell us when service would be restored. End Summary.

Blocking Access to the Outside World

[1](#)2. (C) On the afternoon of October 31, 200 monks in Pakokku peacefully marched against the government (Ref A). By 10:00 p.m., all internet connectivity in Burma was shut off, according to our business and IT contacts. Officials from Myanmar Teleport and the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MTC) rejected this claim, and informed us that internet access was lost around 9:00 a.m. on November 1 due to continuing problems with their underwater cables. Officials cited the same reason for the internet disruptions

in September, following the bloody government crackdown on peaceful anti-government protestors (Ref D). Although they claimed that they were working to resolve the problem, neither MTC nor Myanmar Teleport authorities could say when internet access would be restored.

13. (C) One Embassy contact who works for Myanmar Teleport denied any problems with the underwater cable, and confirmed that the GOB again ordered the ISPs to cut service. MTC immediately followed the order, he stated, but Myanmar Teleport has been slower to cut service. Zaw Naing (PROTECT), GM of Credent Technologies, informed us that he still has sporadic internet access with Myanmar Teleport, but any connectivity is slow, taking more than half an hour to download a page. Noting the timing of the internet problems relative to yesterday's events, Zaw Naing commented that "if the monks continue to march and the government cracks down again, no one will be able to send out footage via the internet. By doing this, the government has effectively blocked the truth."

Internet Cafes Closed

14. (C) Internet cafes, many of which remain open until late, closed last night at 10:00 p.m., after the internet went down with no warning. Several cafes opened on November 1 in the hope that internet connectivity was restored. By 10:30 a.m., all cyber cafes in Rangoon were closed for business. Cafe owners lamented how government officials once again halted internet services to protect themselves with no consideration for Burmese businesses (Ref B).

15. (C) Despite the government's attempt to curtail local internet services, several businessmen confirmed the

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availability of their IPSTAR broadband connections, a satellite service based in Thailand. The GOB has yet to shut down this service, they explained, possibly because several of the favored cronies use it to access the internet. They were unaware of any GOB efforts to pressure the Thais to cut off service, although they acknowledged the possibility.

Comment

16. (C) The government's quick reaction to block the internet the same day the monks resumed protests demonstrates the lengths officials will go to hide the truth from the international community. We expect the internet to remain down as long as anti-regime protests continue. In the meantime, we continue to receive video footage from Burmese and journalists to ensure that it makes its way to the outside world. We would appreciate an update of Washington's thinking about how we might provide more access (Ref E).

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